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SUBJECT: EVANGELICALS PLEDGE CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ALN

REF: A. MANAGUA 1520

[1](#)B. MANAGUA 1333

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Evangelical leaders recently pledged to continue to support the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), led by Eduardo Montealegre, as long as that party continues to uphold Christian values. The reverends noted that Montealegre has a chance to consolidate the party and draw more disenchanted voters from the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC). Regarding the victory of Sandinista Front (FSLN) candidate Daniel Ortega in the November 5 elections, the leaders are hoping for continued positive relations with the USG, but are not optimistic about the country's long-term prosperity. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Poloffs met with leaders of the Nicaraguan Evangelical Association, the Reverends Mauricio Fonseca Pereira, Mauricio Orue Vasquez, Guillermo Ayala, and Danilo Ortiz Zelaya, to discuss the outcome of the November 5 national elections. The reverends noted that Daniel Ortega won with a minority of the vote. They characterized the elections as a victory for the ALN and a defeat for the PLC, which saw its legislative strength halved. Fonseca described ALN candidate Eduardo Montealegre as a "hero" for building a political alternative to the corrupt FSLN and PLC, and stated that the ALN's success has permanently altered the political landscape in Nicaragua by proving that a third party can attract votes.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The reverends claimed that a majority of evangelical Christians (which they estimate constitute about 40 percent of Nicaragua's population) supported the ALN. (Note: Other estimates of the evangelical population range from 25 to 35 percent. End Note.) They mentioned a compact signed with Montealegre outlining mutual interests and values -- a first for a Nicaraguan Presidential candidate. Ayala stated that increasing numbers of evangelicals, and Nicaraguans in general, will support the ALN as long as the party "stays clean." The reverends predicted that many of the PLC's grassroots voters will now see that party as based on lies and fear mongering and will switch allegiance to the ALN.

[1](#)4. (SBU) When asked about the impact of Ortega's victory on Nicaragua, the reverends commented that Nicaraguans are taking a "wait and see" attitude, especially regarding the economy and continued investment. "We pray for good relations with the U.S.," said Orue. Fonseca stated that the FSLN will have a "one year honeymoon" with investors and foreign governments before "sucking the marrow" out of the common people to enrich themselves. Ayala commented that the type of leaders that show up for the inauguration of Ortega will indicate the future path of the FSLN regime. He

wondered aloud whether leaders like Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez would take center stage.

¶5. (SBU) Reverend Fonseca mentioned that Jehovah's Witnesses, a growing denomination in Nicaragua, do not vote out of religious conviction. He estimated that the denomination has about 100,000 adherents in the country. Some of the other reverends reported that Jehovah's Witnesses were also encouraging other evangelicals not to vote.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The evangelicals, a growing segment of the population, have formed a solid base of support for the ALN. One key indicator of the ALN's continued viability will be whether or not Montealegre can continue to successfully manage relations with this group by prioritizing evangelical outreach within the party.
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